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CLAIMS

We Claim:

1. A method for performing software installation into a computing system, comprising the following steps:

   (a) partitioning storage media of the computing system into a first partition and a second partition;

   (b) installing software bundles into the second partition, each software bundle being stored in form as an image; and,

   (c) installing bootable software and a user interface into the first partition, the bootable software and the user interface, when run, being able to receive from a user a selection as to which of the software bundles to install in the computing system, and then install a software bundle selected by the user into the first partition while overwriting the bootable software and the user interface.

2. A method as in claim 1 wherein in step (c) after installation of the software bundle selected by the user, the bootable software erases the installation software bundles in the second partition.

3. A method as in claim 1 wherein in step (c) after installation of the software bundle selected by the user, the bootable software erases the installation software bundles in the second partition by overwriting the second partition with a file system.

4. A method for performing software installation into computing systems comprising the following steps:

   (a) transferring software to be installed from a software provider to a manufacturer, including the following substeps:

      (a.1) transferring operating system software in image-based format, and

      (a.2) transferring hardware specific software in file-based format; and,

   (b) installing the software, by the manufacturer, into the computing systems.

5. A method as in claim 4 wherein step (b) includes the following substeps:

(b.1) installing the operating system software into the computing systems using image-based format data transfer; and,

(b.2) installing the hardware specific software into the computing systems using file-based format data transfer.

6. A method as in claim 4 wherein in substep (a.1), application software is included in an image that includes the operating system software.

7. A method as in claim 4 wherein in substep (a.2), application software is transferred along with the hardware specific software.

8. A method as in claim 4:

wherein in substep (a.1), multiple operating system software bundles are transferred; and,

wherein in step (b), the manufacturer selects one of the multiple operating system software bundles to install into each computing system.

9. A method for performing software installation into computing systems comprising the following steps:

(a) transferring software to be installed from a software provider to a manufacturer, including the following substeps:

(a.1) transferring multiple operating system software bundles, each multiple operating system software bundle being in image-based format, and

(a.2) transferring multiple hardware specific software bundles;

(b) selecting, by the manufacturer, which of the multiple operating system bundles and which of the hardware specific software bundles to install into each computing system; and,

(c) installing, by the manufacturer, into the computing systems, software bundles selected in step (c).

10. A method as in claim 9 wherein in substep (a.2) the multiple hardware specific software bundles are transferred in file-based format.

11. A method as in claim 9:

wherein step (a) additionally comprises the following substep:

       (a.3) transferring multiple application software bundles; and,

wherein step (b) includes selecting, by the manufacturer, which of the multiple
5    application software bundles to install into each computing system.

12. A computing system comprising:

storage media partitioned into a first partition and a second partition;

wherein the second partition contains installation software bundles, each
10   installation software bundle being stored in form as an image; and,

wherein the first partition contains bootable software and a user interface, the
bootable software and the user interface, when run, being able to receive from a user a
selection as to which of the installation software bundles to install in the computing
system, and then installing an installation software bundle selected by the user into
15   the first partition while overwriting the bootable software and the user interface.

13. A computing system as in claim 12 wherein after installing the installation
software bundle selected by the user into the first partition, the installation software
bundles in the second partition are erased.
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14. A computing system as in claim 12 wherein after installing the installation
software bundle selected by the user into the first partition, the bootable software
erases the installation software bundles in the second partition by overwriting the
second partition with a file system.
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15. A computer implemented method for automating software installation,
comprising the following step:

       (a) upon starting the computing system, running bootable software and a user
interface stored within a first partition of storage, the bootable software and a user
30   interface directing the computing system to perform the following substeps:

              (a.1) giving a user an opportunity to select for installation into the
computing system, one from a plurality of software bundles to install in the

computing system, each of the software bundles being stored in form as an image, each image being stored within a second partition of storage,

(a.2) receiving a selection by the user; and,

(a.3) installing a software bundle selected by the user into the first partition while overwriting the bootable software and the user interface.

16. A method as in claim 15 wherein step (a) additionally comprises the following substep:

(a.4) erasing the installation software bundles in the second partition.

17. A method as in claim 15 wherein step (a) additionally comprises the following substep:

(a.4) erasing the installation software bundles in the second partition by overwriting the second partition with a blank file system.

18. A computer implemented method for automating software installation, comprising the following step:

(a) upon starting the computing system, running bootable software and a user interface stored within a storage location, the bootable software and a user interface directing the computing system to perform the following substeps:

(a.1) giving a user an opportunity to select for installation into the computing system, one from a plurality of software bundles to install in the computing system, each of the software bundles being stored in form as an image,

(a.2) receiving a selection by the user; and,

(a.3) installing a software bundle selected by the user into the computing system.

19. A method as in claim 18 wherein step (a) the storage location is a compact disc read only memory (CD-ROM).

20. A method as in claim 18 wherein step (a) the storage location is a digital video disc (DVD).